

How to Write a Clinical Case Report: A 10-Step Guide

Writing a case report is a rewarding experience, especially for young researchers, students, and residents. It can pave the way for larger research. Case reports are vital for sharing unique clinical insights.

Here are 10 actionable steps to guide you through the process:

1. **Identify a Unique or Novel Case:** Select a patient case that presents an unusual diagnosis, treatment, or outcome, or offers new insights into disease management. It should add significant value to medical literature or spark further research.
2. **Obtain Informed Consent and Ensure Privacy:** Before gathering any patient data, you must obtain written informed consent from the patient or their legal representative after explaining the purpose. Always de-identify all patient information.
3. **Collect and Organize Patient Data:** Systematically collect all relevant patient information, including history, examination findings, laboratory results, and imaging studies, from electronic medical records and other sources. Do not forget to get a contact number of the patient or attendant. Some never follow up unless requested.
4. **Comprehensive Literature Search:** Conduct a thorough review of existing literature using multiple databases to understand existing knowledge on your case. This will provide context for your discussion.
5. **Select the Right Journal and Read Guidelines:** Choose a journal that specifically accepts case reports. Carefully review their author instructions for structure, word count, figures, and ethical requirements.
6. **Structure Your Case Report:** Follow the journal's format. It typically includes abstract, case report (history, exam, investigations, differential diagnosis, management, and outcome), and a discussion highlighting the case's unique contribution.
7. **Use High-Quality Visuals:** Include relevant, de-identified high-quality images and videos with clear, description. Ensure they meet journal specifications.
8. **Provide Evidence and Avoid Speculation:** Base your discussion and conclusions on relevant medical literature, citing appropriate references. Avoid making unsubstantiated claims, such as being the "first publication".
9. **Follow CARE guidelines:** Many journals ask to submit the CARE guidelines with the submission. Make sure you know about them <https://www.care-statement.org/>

10. **Ask seniors for guidance:** You might think that the case is unique because you saw it for the first time. Your supervisor might have seen dozens. Always involve a senior colleague while writing a case report.